

# Borderlines

ISSUE 19 • SPRING 2021

NEWSLETTER AND CALENDAR OF EVENTS

## COVID-19: Thinking Beyond Borders



The NEW IBRU  
Online Training  
Course

An interview with  
the Cameroon–  
Nigeria Mixed  
Commission



## BORDERS AND COVID-19

A global pandemic, it would seem, should make us think beyond borders, writes **Professor Phil Steinberg**, Director of IBRU.

**Pathogens cross borders without regard for regulations, walls, or military forces. Supply chains of personal protective equipment, we have all learned, cross borders too.**

Scientific innovations cross borders as well. On 2 December 2020, the first approval of a COVID-19 vaccine that had undergone large-scale efficacy tests occurred when the United Kingdom gave the green light to the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine: a compound manufactured at the Belgian production facilities of a US-based pharmaceuticals giant, in partnership with a German-based biotech firm founded by two children of Turkish immigrants, using a gene sequence uploaded to the internet by Chinese scientists.

Yet the coronavirus pandemic, and the various responses to it, have reminded us that even when pathogens, supply chains, and innovations cross borders, those borders are never truly transcended. In early 2020, when cases began to emerge outside China, the first response of many countries was to shut down their international borders. Border restrictions, with the attendant implication that the virus is something that comes from 'outside,' have remained a favoured policy response, even in instances when high levels of community transmission suggest that more inward-facing policies would be more effective.

Complementing the idea that the virus comes from elsewhere are governments' reminders that vaccines are 'ours,' to be closely held within our borders and reserved for our population. Here in the UK, as I write this in late January, there are two vaccines in distribution, the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine and one developed by a partnership of Oxford University and the Anglo-Swedish firm AstraZeneca. The British government and media routinely call the latter 'the Oxford vaccine,' associating it with one of Britain's most respected institutions rather than a corporation with complex European ties (and a non-English-sounding name). This national branding of the vaccine has

apparently been successful. Paul Williams, a doctor with the National Health Service and former Member of Parliament, reports that a number of patients have turned down the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine, saying they will "wait for the English one."<sup>1</sup>

'Vaccine nationalism' has ramifications beyond branding and individual acts of refusal. Several stories emerged in 2020 of the United States trying to purchase European biotech start-ups, or encouraging them to locate production facilities in the US, in return for a commitment to provide exclusively for the US market. More recently, a spat has developed between the UK and the European Union amidst production failures at AstraZeneca's Belgian facility. The EU has demanded that production from AstraZeneca's UK plants be diverted to Europe to make up for the shortfall, and the UK has resisted. A threat by the EU to retaliate by establishing export controls on Pfizer's plant in Belgium, where the UK's supply of the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine is manufactured, in turn, has revived simmering tensions at the 'soft' border between the Republic of Ireland and post-Brexit Northern Ireland. Borders, it seems, are as pertinent as ever during a global pandemic.

Meanwhile, lone voices remind us that this is a pandemic that crosses borders and that its resolution requires a border-crossing solution. Noting that seventy-five percent of all vaccine doses had been deployed in just ten countries, Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General of the World Health Organization, has called for wealthy nations to divert their supplies to the world's poorer countries once their own healthcare workers and at-risk citizens had been vaccinated.

"When a village is on fire," Ghebreyesus said in January 2021, "it makes no sense for a small group of people to hoard all the extinguishers to defend their own houses. The fire will be put out faster if everyone has an extinguisher and works together, in unison."<sup>2</sup>

Although many of the vaccine doses that will cross the borders between wealthy, vaccine-producing countries and the rest of the world will be delivered by the WHO's COVAX programme, it appears that many also will be the result of bilateral aid initiatives. Indeed, maps of emergency approval and distribution for each vaccine are already beginning to exhibit patterns of geopolitical alliances.<sup>3</sup>

Even at the heart of globalisation, the broader contours of our bordered world are reaffirmed. Consider the plight of hundreds of thousands of international seafarers who remain stranded on their vessels after their contract has run out, as COVID-19 restrictions deny them the right to disembark across borders onto dry land.

Furthermore, the borders that we make and remake as we cope with the COVID-19 pandemic are not just between states. At the scale of the home, we attempt (with varying degrees of success) to draw borders between the spaces and times reserved for work and those for family. When we leave home, we draw two-meter exclusion zones around our bodies. Borders travel with us even as, these days, we do much less travelling across international boundaries.

At IBRU, as practical problem solvers and educators, we look forward to a day, hopefully in the not-too-distant future, when we can resume our normal everyday activities. However, as social scientists, we recognise that this 'normal' is itself beset by complexities and contradictions. The coronavirus crisis is both changing the nature of borders, at multiple scales, and reminding us that borders have never been simply barriers. IBRU thus looks forward to continuing its mission of facilitating both the understanding and management of borders, during the coronavirus crisis, and after it has subsided.

<sup>1</sup>Zoe Tidman, "Coronavirus: Patients reject Pfizer vaccine for 'English' Oxford jab, says doctor," *The Independent*, 7 January 2021, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/health/coronavirus-vaccine-pfizer-oxford-b1784086.html>.

<sup>2</sup>WHO Director-General's opening remarks at the media briefing on COVID-19 – 29 January 2021, <https://www.who.int/director-general/speeches/detail/who-director-general-s-opening-remarks-at-the-media-briefing-on-covid-19-29-january-2021> and <https://www.who.int/director-general/speeches/detail/debate-on-the-report-covid-19-vaccines-ethical-legal-and-practical-considerations>.

<sup>3</sup>New York Times Coronavirus Vaccine Tracker, <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/science/coronavirus-vaccine-tracker.html>.

*As part of a set of COVID-19 prevention and control measures at Suvarnabhumi International Airport, Thailand, health workers from the Department of Disease Control take the temperature of an incoming passenger in the airport's health control area. Image courtesy of WHO / P. Phutpheng*

*Cover Image: "Corona Globe" Image courtesy of Elchinator/Pixabay*



## Cameroon–Nigeria Mixed Commission (CNMC): an insight into the winner of the 2020 Raymond Milefsky Award

In 2020, IBRU awarded the third annual Ray Milefsky award to the Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission (CNMC), the United Nations organisation tasked with implementing the 2002 International Court of Justice (ICJ) judgment covering the two states' land and maritime boundaries. IBRU Director Phil Steinberg interviewed Mohamed Ibn Chambas, Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for West Africa and the Sahel and Chair of the CNMC.



CNMC Chairman Mohamed Ibn Chambas. Image courtesy of Daniel Baril (CNMC)

**The CNMC has an expansive mandate. Has the multifaceted nature of the CNMC's work hindered or assisted the Commission in carrying out its duties?**

The mandate of the CNMC covers: 'supporting the demarcation of the land boundary and the delineation of the maritime boundary; facilitating the withdrawal and transfer of authority in the Lake Chad area, along the boundary and in Bakassi Peninsula; addressing the situation of affected populations; and making recommendations on confidence-building measures' (2nd Communiqué).

The CNMC has since found itself dealing not only with a demarcation problem requiring a multi-disciplinary team but dealing with a multi-faceted problem affecting two nations, two regions and local populations that are delicately divided by the line. This has presented a challenge because, apart from resolving an international boundary problem for which the two countries agree in principle, there are cases where challenges have been met from local populations whose comprehension of the boundary is different from the technical boundary in the demarcation instrument. The inclusion of cross-border cooperation programmes and confidence building initiatives has enabled the process of demarcation to proceed smoothly with the cooperation of local populations who, for the first time, were learning how to live and deal with the implications of a demarcated international boundary.

**Your mention of local populations' concerns reminds me of last year's Borderlines interview with Professor Akihiro Iwashita who stressed the need for community consultation. How has the CNMC balanced this imperative for community input with its mission to restore colonial-era boundaries that were made without regard for community interest?**

The CNMC is dealing with a boundary that passes through more than 300 villages throughout its entirety. There is a lot of cross border trading among communities with people owning farmlands in one country while living in the other. The situation is even more complicated when it comes to cattle herders where cattle have to traverse the border in search for pastures. Demarcation of the boundary introduces hard boundaries which, if not properly understood, may lead to immediate localised tensions among communities failing to understand the implication of the demarcation. The CNMC carries out extensive sensitisation exercises alongside its demarcation to ensure that the process does not affect the local populations or, if it does, it is clearly understood and has the minimum impact on their livelihoods. We are convinced that the boundary divides a territory but not a population.

**Does the CNMC's experience in the Lake Chad basin, which has changed drastically since it was first divided in the 19th century, provide lessons for other boundary delimitations in rapidly changing environments?**

Changes in physical geography not only affect the Lake Chad area, but have been observed throughout the course of the boundary. Where the boundary

was defined by rivers or artificial features that have changed or disappeared over time, the demarcation instruments have been found to lack precision. They were also drafted in two languages that are not always consistent when viewed under a technical microscope. Experience in the Lake Chad area helped the CNMC prepare for these geo-physical changes and got the working teams to understand that they may be looking for features that may have changed over time or been tampered with. In some cases, the CNMC had to bring in expert hydrologists to determine the original course of a river which now passes through a village, and expert geodesists to determine which of the peaks between two hills was the one referred to in the original demarcation.

**In the popular press, borders are usually associated with dispute and conflict. Does the success of the CNMC suggest that border delimitation and management can also build peace?**

Building consensus between the Parties to implement the ICJ judgment was not always easy. Over time, working together through the CNMC, we were able to build trust and develop brotherly, cooperative relations, especially during the field operations to physically assess the land boundary. Genuine warmth developed among the teams of surveyors, and now, as we approach the end of that process, the prospect of cross-border development projects in favour of local populations affected by the demarcation builds support from those communities that straddle the boundary. Importantly, both countries confront threats of insurgency and terrorist extremism, especially in the north. Their ability to manage their common border facilitates a joint, cooperative response to these security concerns, which arise in border areas.



Boundary pillar building in the town of Kontcha in Cameroon. Image courtesy of Daniel Baril (CNMC)

**How can the CNMC serve as a model for other states, in Africa and elsewhere, seeking to delimit and manage their borders?**

The main lesson learned from the CNMC is that boundaries are best demarcated in times of peace, as opposed to waiting until there is a dispute. At the beginning of the process, it was very difficult to get the Parties to come to a consensus on the actual course of the boundary, with each Party remaining fixed with its own interpretation of the demarcation instruments. This divergence of opinion gave rise to disagreements early in the exercise. As the process advanced and the Parties developed confidence in each other and tensions over the Bakassi decision subsided, there were less and less occurrences of such divergences in opinion or, if there were any, they were resolved on the ground. The Parties have even come back to re-examine the areas they previously disagreed on and have found ways to continue discussions to resolve their differences. It would make sense, therefore, to encourage neighbouring countries to demarcate their common boundaries and have an ongoing border management program.

## Boundaries in the news 2020

Officials from **The Philippines** and **China** were expected to meet in January to discuss a proposed joint oil exploration project in the Reed Bank Area of the South China Sea.

**Indonesia** intensified its patrols in the waters off the Natuna Islands, in the Riau Islands province, following persistent intrusion by **Chinese** coast guard vessels escorting Chinese fishing boats into the exclusive economic zone (EEZ) claimed by Indonesia.

An agreement was reached between **Kuwait** and **Saudi Arabia** concerning oil production in the Neutral Zone, an area of land and water defined in a 1922 agreement. The agreement included a division of the area and a memorandum of understanding related to resuming oil production.

In February, the EU said they would not intervene in the border dispute between **Croatia** and **Slovenia**, stating it had no jurisdiction in the dispute and that the two states were required to find a solution between themselves.

**Singapore** and **Malaysia** began negotiations on delimiting the maritime boundaries around Pedra Branca, Middle Rocks and South Ledge in February. Officials from both sides met to continue discussions on implementing the International Court of Justice's (ICJ) judgment over the sovereignty of the maritime features.

In March the Inter Ministerial Commission for the Delimitation and Demarcation of the Common Maritime Border between **Angola** and the **Republic of the Congo** agreed they would delimit their maritime border by 2022. They currently share the Lianzi Oil Field located in a unitized zone, which includes parts of Block 14 located in Angola, and the Haute Mer Permit located in the Republic of the Congo.

In a move which appears to be an attempt to cement its territorial claims, **China** created two districts and named 25 islands and reefs and 55 underwater locations in the disputed waters of the South China

Sea in April. **Vietnam** claimed that the move "seriously violated" its territorial sovereignty in the area.

**China** produced new maps of its territory in April that included parts of Arunachal Pradesh, the **Indian** hill state bordering Tibet, within its international boundaries. They also revealed changes to the disputed area of Mulasading on the **China/Bhutan** border and the borders of Tashkurgan County in the Kashgar region on the **China/Tajikistan** border.

Negotiations between **Ethiopia**, **Egypt** and **Sudan** on the completion and filling of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) stalled again in May and June after confrontations on the border between Ethiopia and Sudan. The clashes cast doubt over the future of Sudanese-Ethiopian relations and may impact ongoing tensions surrounding the GERD.

In June, **Greece** and **Italy** reached an historic agreement on the delimitation of maritime zones in the Ionian Sea. The signing of the agreement on the boundaries of the two countries' Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs) was effectively an extension of a previous maritime borders deal that was agreed in 1977, but the formal agreement concluded 40 years of uncertainty.

Also in June, clashes broke out between **Indian** and **Chinese** troops along the disputed Himalayan border in the Ladakh area of Kashmir after both sides met in the Galwan Valley. It was reported that fighting between the two sides started when an Indian patrol came across Chinese forces on a narrow ridge. The Indian Foreign Ministry confirmed that at least 20 of their troops were dead.

In July, **Cameroon** and **Equatorial Guinea** held bilateral talks over their disputed border, resulting in Equatorial Guinea agreeing to temporarily halt the construction of a controversial border wall. Equatorial Guinea started to build a wall along the 183km stretch of their border with Cameroon in August 2019, which led to tensions after Cameroon accused Equatorial Guinea of

"intolerable encroachment" and "expansionist ambitions" on its land. Tensions in the Eastern

Mediterranean intensified in August with **Turkey** and **Greece** entangled in a war of words over potential offshore gas and oil deposits and their rights to over-lapping Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs). NATO made an attempt to defuse tensions between fellow members Turkey and Greece, and stepped in to ease the maritime row which had been escalating since early June amid signs of increasing militarisation in early September.

In September **France**, **Germany** and the **United Kingdom** filed a joint *note verbale* with the United Nations in New York, rejecting China's sweeping claims over the South China Sea. The *note verbale* stated that China's claims to "historic rights" over the South China Sea do not comply with international law and provisions of the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).

In October **Albania** and **Greece** agreed to resolve the maritime border dispute between the two countries through the International Court of Justice.

Also in October, the Maldives affirmed that the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea (ITLOS) did not possess the jurisdiction to investigate the dispute concerning the delimitation of the maritime boundary between **Mauritius** and **Maldives**.

**Armenia** and **Azerbaijan** were in renewed conflict over disputed territory and fighting broke out in the mountainous region of Nagorno-Karabakh, a disputed ethnic Armenian territory surrounded by Azerbaijan territory.

In October the EU said it could impose sanctions on **Turkey** over "provocations and pressures" in a row with **Greece** over energy resources and maritime borders. Also **Greece** finalized plans to extend a wall along its northeast border with **Turkey**, over concerns that migrants may try to stage mass crossings into the European Union country.

In November, **Egypt** and **Greece** agreed to expand their Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) agreement in the Eastern Mediterranean to allow greater cooperation and restore balance and security in the region.

Also in November military talks between **India** and **China** started at Chushul in Eastern Ladakh to resolve the ongoing border dispute and de-escalation of forces on both sides.

The Joint Boundary Demarcation Commission between **Sudan** and **South Sudan** met in Khartoum in November to continue the latest round of negotiations aimed at defining their shared border.

In November **Israel** and **Lebanon**, although still technically at war, completed a third round of talks around their disputed maritime border and the offshore hydrocarbon exploration rights that come with it. In December, the maritime border talks were postponed due to differences, and U.S. mediators will talk to both sides separately in the future.

In December, **Estonia** erected a barbed-wire fence along an 8-kilometer section of its border with **Russia** in the first instalment of its three-year border infrastructure project.

The International Court of Justice (ICJ) was due to hold public proceedings on the question of the Court's jurisdiction in the case concerning the Arbitral Award of 3 October 1899 (**Guyana v. Venezuela**). The hearing had been due to take place between 23-27 March, however due to the COVID pandemic, the hearing was postponed until June and finally concluded in December. In December, the court found that it has jurisdiction to entertain the Application filed originally by Guyana on 29 March 2018 in so far as it concerns the validity of the Arbitral Award of 3 October 1899 and the related question of the definitive settlement of the land boundary dispute between Guyana and Venezuela.

## Seeking nominations for the 2021 Raymond Milefsky Award

IBRU was deeply saddened by the death on 1 August 2016 of Ray Milefsky, one of the leading lights of border studies community. A long-time employee of the US Department of State's Office of the Geographer and Global Affairs, Ray was also a frequent tutor at IBRU workshops and a great supporter of IBRU's mission of encouraging peaceful settlement of border disputes through education and research.

Ray endowed an annual award, to be administered by IBRU, to honour a leading border practitioner. Specifically, the award is for an individual or organisation who:

- Has advanced knowledge of boundary-making or cross-border cooperation, OR
- Has implemented a programme over that past year that has contributed substantively to boundary-making or cross-border cooperation.

The awardee will receive an award of £745, as well as a profile in the next edition of Borderlines.

IBRU is requesting nominating letters of no more than one page in length. They should briefly detail what the individual or organisation has contributed to boundary-making or cross-border cooperation, and how they meet the criteria noted above.

Self-nominations are permitted and nominations received last year will be automatically rolled in to the 2021 award.

Nominations should be sent to IBRU's email address ([ibru@durham.ac.uk](mailto:ibru@durham.ac.uk)) and must be received by 1 June 2021.

Selection of the awardee will be made by a committee consisting of the members of the IBRU Steering Community, plus one external representative.



## 2021 TRAINING PROGRAMME

Our workshops in 2020 were severely impacted upon by the COVID-19 pandemic and once again in 2021 we will not be able to run a full suite of training workshops. Instead we plan to run a limited number of workshops in 2021 alongside our online training course, with IBRU working in collaboration with partners around the world to deliver a compelling series.

### Online Training Course

IBRU's online training courses complement our world-renowned professional training workshops. They feature IBRU and Durham University academics, as well as invited expert guest practitioners, and provide broad introductions to core topics in international boundaries. They are a great way to learn more about specific topics or simply refresh your knowledge in areas where you may already have some experience. They can be taken on their own or in preparation for attending one of our more focused, practitioner-led, face-to-face workshops. IBRU's online courses are designed to be completed at your own leisure, at a time and place convenient to you.

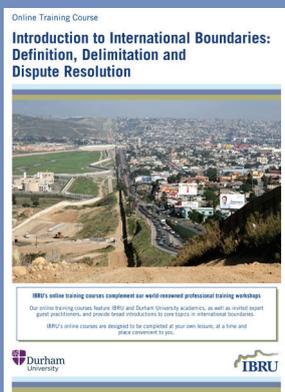


Images: Courtesy of Pixabay, Mexico Border Wall courtesy of Estela Parra

#### Online training

Price £215 per person

£100 per person (if in full or part-time education)



### Introduction to International Boundaries: Definition, Delimitation and Dispute Resolution

International boundaries are a major source of friction between neighbouring states. Many land boundaries remain poorly defined and fewer than half of the world's potential maritime boundaries have been fully agreed. Governments recognise the value of clearly-defined boundaries, yet the political, economic and social complexities of boundary regions, as well as the details of topography and history, often make resolving competing territorial and jurisdictional claims extraordinarily difficult.

This online training course provides a simple, contextual overview of international boundaries and the practical measures that can be taken to resolve international boundary disputes. Through a series of short online lectures and a final practical exercise, the course explores the relevance of borders and looks at land and maritime boundary disputes, before covering methods available for dispute resolution.

#### About the course

The course consists of almost four hours of video content and concludes with an exercise where participants argue why a delimitation line should be drawn at a specific location, as well as outlining negotiation strategy and preferred dispute resolution venue.

The videos can be watched in your own time and will be available for review as long as your licence is active. You will not need to complete the course in one go but can fit it around your schedule as required.

To book your place on the online course please visit our website:

<https://www.dur.ac.uk/ibru/workshops/online/introtoboundaries/>

#### Feedback from online course participants

Our new online course has been completed by people all over the world and they have great things to say about it.

*"Bitesize videos were well put together and the exercise was challenging but manageable"*

*"The course content was very interesting and informative, and it offered great flexibility in terms of delivery."*

*"I found the content very helpful and the topics chosen were great for an overall introduction to the issue."*

*"Importantly I had a greater knowledge after the course than before. The videos follow a logical order and are clear / well presented."*

*"I appreciated the opportunity to undertake an online IBRU training course. .... Of course, face-to-face courses are always preferable, but in my case attending face-to-face is almost impossible - I live in Australia and do not work for a university or institution that would financially support my attendance, so the distance and financial barrier for me to attend is very high. Thank you."*

## PROFESSIONAL TRAINING WORKSHOPS

IBRU's unique boundary training programme has been running since 1996, attracting over 1,600 participants from 123 countries around the world. Our professional training workshops are led by teams of expert tutors and provide a relevant combination of background theory and practical application in an informal teaching environment. Numbers are limited to maximise interaction between tutors and participants so we advise you book early to guarantee your place.

### Professional Training Workshop

25-27 October 2021  
The Hague, Netherlands  
Price: £1900 per person

### Negotiating Maritime Boundaries

Clearly defined maritime boundaries are essential for good international relations and effective ocean management, yet few coastal states have agreed all their maritime boundaries with their neighbours. Part of the reason for this is that boundary delimitation requires a range of specialist legal and technical skills which are not always readily available to governments. This workshop, led by some of the world's most experienced boundary negotiators, is designed to equip participants with the knowledge and skills required to conclude a successful maritime boundary agreement.

The programme will be structured around a full-day boundary negotiation exercise in which participants will work in teams to resolve a boundary dispute based on a real-world scenario. The course will also include practical instruction on building and preparing a negotiating team, negotiation strategy and tactics, and drafting an agreement.



To make an enquiry about our workshops, please contact the IBRU Events Team

Tel: +44 (0)191 334 1965 Email: [ibru-events@durham.ac.uk](mailto:ibru-events@durham.ac.uk)

Find out more and book online at [www.durham.ac.uk/ibru/workshops](http://www.durham.ac.uk/ibru/workshops)

### JRV Prescott Student Scholarship Programme

Thanks to a generous donation from the estate of international boundaries scholar JRV Prescott, IBRU is pleased to announce a scholarship programme to support postgraduate attendance at IBRU professional training workshops.

IBRU will award the annual Prescott Fellowship to one deserving postgraduate student, to attend an IBRU training workshop. Each year, applications will be due at the end of June, after the year's schedule of training workshops has been announced.

The annual Prescott Fellowship recipient will receive a full waiver of workshop registration fees (typically around £2,000) as well as access to up to £500 to offset costs associated with travel and subsistence.

For more information, including instructions on how to apply, see: [www.dur.ac.uk/ibru/boundarynews/prescottscholarship/](http://www.dur.ac.uk/ibru/boundarynews/prescottscholarship/)

Due to the global COVID pandemic, we are not expecting many workshops to run so choice of workshop will be limited this year.

The deadline for applying to attend a 2021 training workshop is 1 June 2021.



*Borderlines* is the newsletter of IBRU, the Centre for Borders Research at Durham University. It has a readership of more than 3,500 boundary scholars, practitioners and enthusiasts around the world.

Since its founding as the International Boundaries Research Unit in 1989, IBRU has been the world's leading research centre on international boundary making and dispute resolution. Today, IBRU brings together work in international boundary law with the geographic study of borders and bordering in the 21st century.

For more information about IBRU visit our website at [www.durham.ac.uk/ibru](http://www.durham.ac.uk/ibru)

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A NEW IBRU  
WEBSITE

Keep an eye out in  
2021 for a  
new-look IBRU  
website!